

MILTON IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY



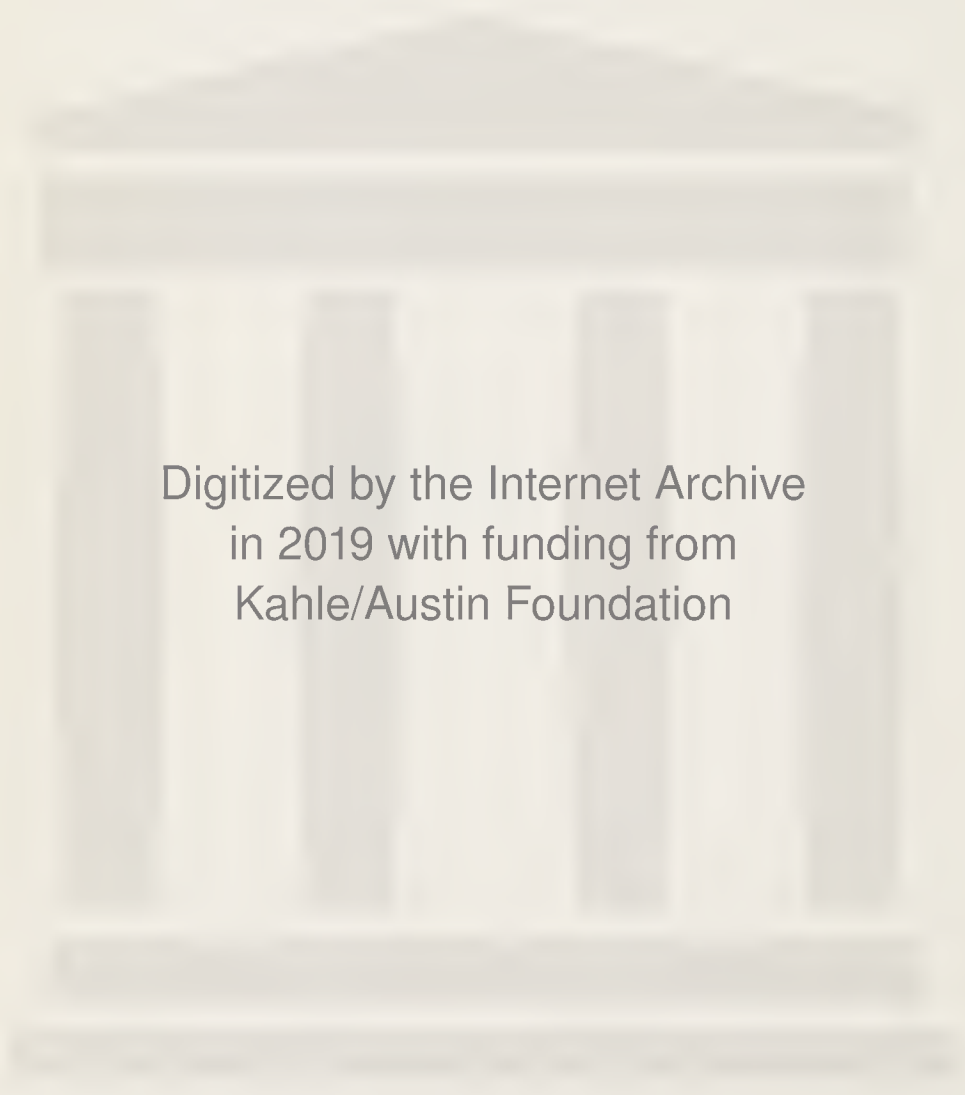
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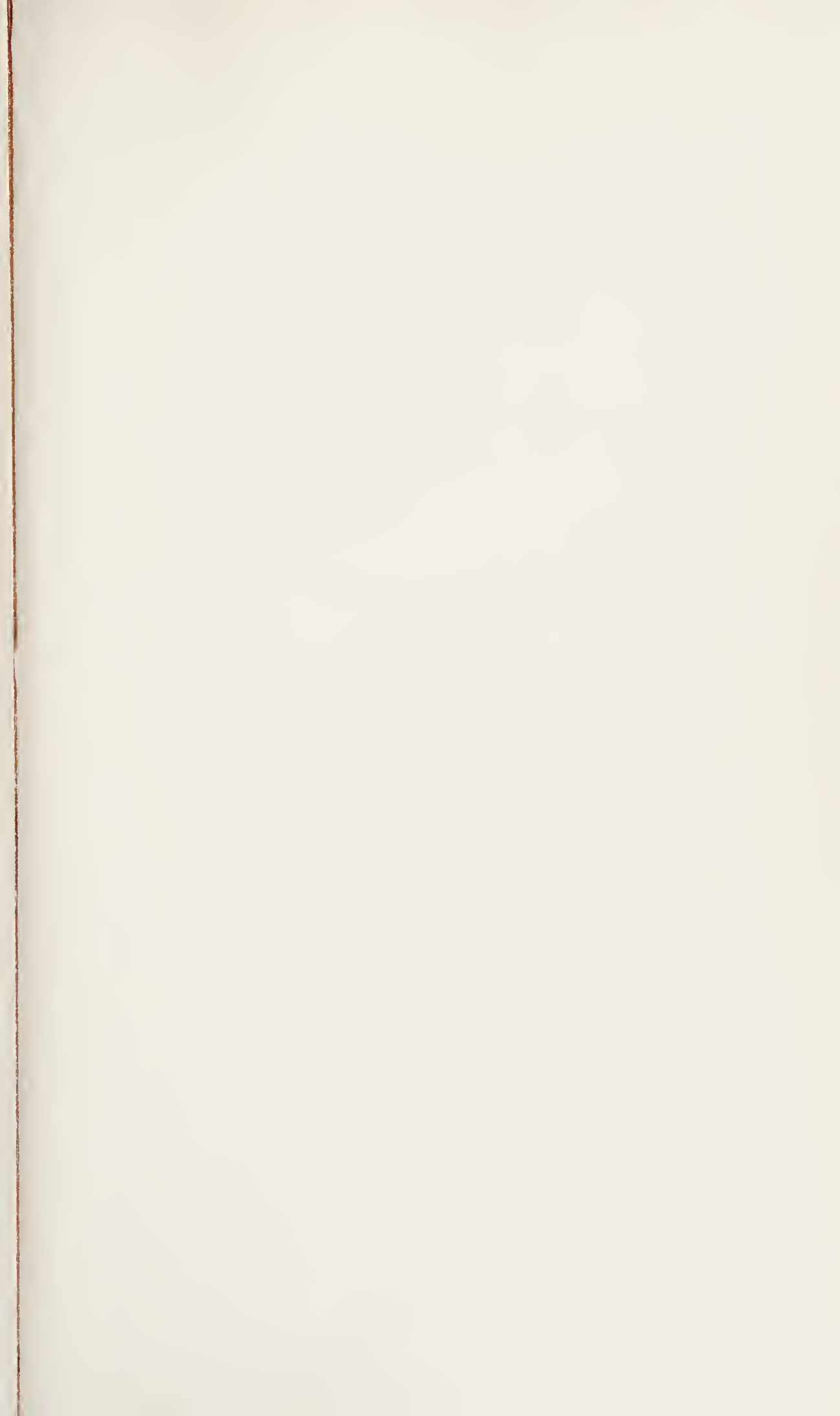
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MILTON IN THE EIGHTEENTH
CENTURY (1701-1750)

BY EDWARD DOWDEN

Read December 10, 1908.

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THE influence of Milton on the literature of the eighteenth century was threefold—an influence on poetic style, independent in a great degree of poetic matter and therefore not wholly favourable to literature, during the first half of the century, felt in the main by writers who were not in a high sense original; secondly, an influence alike on sentiment and style, which formed one of the many affluents of the Romantic movement of the second half of the century, or, to be more exact, from about 1740 onwards; thirdly, an influence on thought, appearing at irregular intervals, but always associated with political liberalism or radicalism, from Birch and Benson and James Thomson to Hollis, Archdeacon Blackburne, and William Godwin in England, and to Mirabeau in France. The first of these modes of influence is chiefly connected with *Paradise Lost*, the second with Milton's earlier poems, the third with his prose writings.

Milton scholarship had more to do in the eighteenth than in the nineteenth century, and, setting aside the work of David Masson on Milton's life, it did much more in the earlier than in the later period. The first critical study in detail of an English poem is probably that by Addison of *Paradise Lost*. The first variorum edition of an English poet is Newton's edition of Milton. Early texts were collated, the Cambridge manuscripts were examined, sources were investigated, conjectural emendations were proposed, explanatory notes and parallels from classical, English, and Italian writers were accumulated, points of punctuation and peculiar spelling were considered, a verbal index was compiled, the poet's versification was studied, by the successive scholars of the eighteenth century. When Todd's first edition appeared in 1801 the harvest had in great measure been garnered. Even the excursions and alarms connected with Bentley's castigation

of *Paradise Lost*, with Lauder's forgeries, with Peck's ascription to Milton of a translation of Buchanan's *Baptistes*, and with the harsher sentences of Johnson's life of the poet, indicate the interest which was felt in all that concerned him. And if Addison was occupied with Milton's greatest English poem in years not far from the opening of the century, Cowper was engaged upon his Latin poetry in years which drew towards its close. The notes made in this paper touch only on work of the years from 1701 to 1750.

By the opening of the eighteenth century the fame of the author of *Paradise Lost* was established. Six editions of that poem had been published; it had received a commentary from Patrick Hume and pictorial illustrations of folio size, not of high excellence, but in the taste of the time; it had been translated into German; it had been translated into Latin. The *Minor Poems* had appeared in at least three editions. The *Prose Works*—English and Latin—had been collected in stately volumes. Milton had been eulogized in prose and in verse by Dryden. Somers and Atterbury had promoted the publication of the folio *Paradise Lost*, for which there were no fewer than five hundred subscribers. The publisher, Tonson, afterwards declared that the volume 'was so well received, notwithstanding the price was four times greater than before, [that] the sale increased double the number every year'. Aubrey had collected notes relating to Milton's life; Anthony Wood had given him a place in the *Athenae*; a biography by Edward Phillips was prefixed to the *Letters of State* in 1694; a fuller biography by Toland was published in 1698; three and a half large pages were devoted to Milton—the adversary of Salmasius—by Bayle in his *Dictionary*; before long Milton was to take his place in a new edition of Morhof's *Polyhistor*. And it should be remembered that Milton's fame rose in spite of the hostility awakened in many quarters by his political and, to some extent, by his religious opinions. When Phillips printed for the first time in 1694 the sonnet to Cromwell, it was considered expedient to omit the line which tells of trophies reared on the neck of crowned Fortune. When the prose works were printed in London, it seemed the part of discretion to name 'Amsterdam' on the title-page. When, in 1692, *A Defence of the People of England* was translated and printed without a publisher's name, the anonymous publisher added the titles of a list of books useful to correct the impression left by Milton of 'so great a Prince and so glorious a Martyr as the late King Charles the First'. The author of *The Vision of Purgatory* in 1680 placed Milton in that uncomfortable region, where he is discovered in earnest discourse with a Provincial of the Jesuits. The author of *Remarks on Toland's Life of*

Milton is more angry with the biographer than with the subject of his biography, but already the title 'Socinian' as well as that of 'Republican' is connected with Milton's name. When Winstanley represents the fame of Milton as having gone out like a candle in snuff, he knows that this effect defective came by cause—Milton was 'a most notorious traitor, and most impiously and villainously belied the blessed martyr, King Charles the First'. Grudging praise is given to Milton by Langbaine in 1691: 'Had his principles been as good as his parts, he had been an excellent person', but when Gildon a few years later edits Langbaine's *Dramatick Poets* the note is changed; Milton is now 'an author of that excellence of genius and learning, that none of any age or nation, I think, has excel'd him'.

So the seventeenth century closed, and the eighteenth century opens with a writer too frequently forgotten in connexion with the criticism of Milton. Dennis—not Addison—leads the way. And Dennis's point of view is of considerable interest. Through him the study of Milton connects itself with that quarrel between the Ancients and the Moderns in France, which constitutes a kind of prologue to the history throughout the eighteenth century of the idea of human progress, an idea playing no unimportant part in the thought of the period. Dennis deplored the low estate to which English poetry had fallen at the date of Dryden's death. It seemed to him contemptible as art, and he knew that poetry, especially dramatic poetry, had within recent years offended against morals by grossness of sentiment and obscenity of language. The artistic poverty and the ethical offence, Dennis thought, were not unconnected. But how should poetry be reformed? For some of the aesthetic aberrations an observance of 'the Rules' might be a remedy; the rules are only nature and reason methodized. But poetry of a high order springs from the passions; it is here that true reformation must begin. The deepest and the loftiest passions of our nature are those connected with religion. That reform and that advancement of poetry which Dennis desired were, he maintained, to be hoped for especially from the inspiring influence of religious feeling and a sacred theme. He remembered the warnings of Boileau against decorating with ornament 'the terrible mysteries of the Christian faith', his warnings against the 'criminal mixture' of poetic fiction with sacred truth; and undoubtedly it is a hard matter to contrive 'machines' for an epic poem on a Christian subject. But if Boileau meant more than this, he was an erring guide. Dennis admits that the ancient poets excelled the modern; they did so because, in the first place, observing the rules, they were true to nature, and, in the second, they took

advantage of the enthusiasm derived from religion. But there is no reason why the order of comparative excellence should not be reversed; the Pagan religions were false; the Christian religion is true; and no one can question that the inspiration which springs from truth is of a nobler kind than that communicated by falsehood. The fact is obvious to reason; but, in addition to this, it has been established by one majestic example—that of a modern poet who surpassed all the ancients and all the moderns—our English Milton. Having cited in support of his doctrine a passage from *Paradise Lost*, the critic breaks forth: ‘At the same time that the eye is ravishingly entertained, admiration is raised to a height and the reason is supremely satisfied.’

With these ardent words of John Dennis the criticism of Milton in the eighteenth century is introduced. They appear in his discourse on *The Advancement and Reformation of Modern Poetry*, published in 1701, and dedicated to one who was himself a reformer, Sheffield, Earl of Mulgrave. Dennis hoped to follow this with a much larger treatise, a volume in folio, to be published by subscription under the title *A Criticism upon our most celebrated English Poets Deceas'd*. A Proposal, with a specimen of the work, was issued, Dennis choosing as his specimen ‘the substance of what will be said in the Beginning of the criticism of Mil-ton.’¹ Garth and others did something to obtain the half-guineas in advance from subscribers, to be followed by a second half-guinea on publication. The list includes some distinguished names, but the total number of persons who made the financial venture—some eighty and odd—did not seem to warrant the outlay necessary for a folio volume. During three months after the last subscription had come in Dennis worked on; then he lost heart, and printed in octavo (1704), with the Proposal and Specimen, a fragment of the great work, but a fragment in itself complete, entitled *The Grounds of Criticism in Poetry*. As in the earlier volume, so here he is concerned with the reformation and advancement of modern poetry, but he now distinguishes between the ‘Greater’ poetry, consisting of epic, tragedy, and the greater ode, and the ‘Less’, which includes comedy, the little ode, and satire. Milton, whose work belongs to the nobler order of poetry, is described as ‘one of the greatest and most daring Genius’s that has appeared in the World’; *Paradise Lost* is ‘the greatest poem that ever was written by Man’; the author ‘made his Country a glorious present of the most lofty, but most irregular, Poem that has been produc’d by the Mind of Man’. It is irregular because the superhuman theme

¹ I preserve the hyphened ‘Mil-ton’ of Dennis for Baconians, who have ascertained that ‘Shake-speare’ was a different person from the actor ‘Shakspere’.

and superhuman characters do not permit an adherence to the rules of Aristotle, which rules Milton knew well and esteemed highly, but deliberately decided to disregard as inapplicable to his subject. It was not here that the poet's chief error lay; so long as he draws his enthusiasm from the highest religious conceptions he soars with no middle flight, and may soar free of the rules. But towards the close of the poem he descends from the wondrous works of God to tell, through the angel's speeches, and Adam's visions, of the works of corrupted man, from which could be derived no sort of enthusiasm; and least of all 'that admiration and terror which give the principal greatness and elevation to poetry'. It may be that when Philomela, whom unpoetical mortals knew then as Elizabeth Singer and afterwards as Mrs. Elizabeth Rowe, published her *Divine Hymns and Poems* in 1704, 'in imitation of Mr. Milton,' she was responding to the pleadings of Dennis in his earlier discourse. He was himself a contributor to her volume.

Addison's papers in *The Spectator* were written not because *Paradise Lost* was unknown, but rather because it was well enough known to make many readers wish to know it better. Those of us who watched the growth of Robert Browning's fame can remember that the time when editors of reviews and magazines were most desirous to obtain an appreciation (as it is called) or an interpretation was not when he was the peculiar possession of a few admirers, but when he was widely read, and yet read with an imperfect comprehension which rendered the question void of offence—Understandest thou what thou readest? Several years before the *Spectator* papers appeared, the author of *The English Theophrastus* represented the aspirant to wit and critical talent of that date as slighting Shakespeare, Jonson, and Dryden, but he is 'a great admirer of the incomparable Milton', and 'fondly endeavours to imitate his Sublime'. Addison does not argue the position, but assumes at the outset, as something granted, that 'the first place among our English poets is due to Milton'. He was not the writer to force anything upon a reluctant public in a paper which had become popular. His mode of procedure was somewhat tentative; he did not feel sure that he could sustain the interest of his readers during a long series of articles, and he announced that the series would close with the seventh number. His bookseller assured him that for these papers there was an unusual demand. In fact the Saturdays of more than four months—eighteen numbers—were devoted to *Paradise Lost*. Addison had the advantage over Dennis of being unencumbered with a theory; he could insinuate his feeling for the beauties of the poem by more persuasive touches. He differed

from his predecessor by finding that Milton had in the main observed the rules of epic poetry: but he agrees with Dennis in thinking that the poem flags in the narrative of the history of mankind towards its close. Undoubtedly Addison contributed much to the intelligent enjoyment of Milton by those who already were prepared to enjoy his poetry; every admirer could justify his admiration by the latest authority. In 1712 Leonard Welsted published his translation of Longinus on the Sublime. Addressing an unnamed friend, who like Addison was a lover of *Cherry Chase*, Welsted refers to the *Spectator* articles. 'It's undoubtedly true of Milton,' he writes, 'that no man ever had a genius so happily form'd for the Sublime. . . . When I view him thus, in his most exalted flights, piercing beyond the boundaries of the Universe, he appears to me as a vast Comet, that for want of room is ready to burst its Orb and grow eccentric.' Such enthusiasm did not now appear extravagant. But whether Addison's papers did much to widen the circle of Milton's readers in England remains uncertain. The pocket edition of *Paradise Lost*, published shortly before the appearance of the *Spectator* papers, was not succeeded by a new edition for eight years. Within the six years preceding Addison's criticism three editions had been published. Unless, however, we knew the number of copies in each edition, we could not draw a certain conclusion. Addison unquestionably, at a somewhat later date, influenced opinion in France, and prepared the way for translations which before very long were to make their appearance.

'English poetry,' writes Mr. Walter Raleigh, 'went Milton-mad during the earlier half of the eighteenth century.' He refers especially to the influence of Milton's blank verse and Milton's diction on certain poets from the author of *The Splendid Shilling* and *Cyder* onwards. The poetry of the second half of the century went Milton-mad under the influence of the minor poems, and in particular of *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*. Thomas Warton, who edited with a learned devotion Milton's *Poems upon Several Occasions*, maintains that these were little known during the years from 1700 to about 1740. Addison commends *Comus* and mentions *L'Allegro*. Bentley in 1732 cites a line from *Comus*. But not a hemistich, says Warton, is quoted from any of Milton's earlier poems in the collections of those 'who digested the beauties or phrases of English poets from 1655 to 1738 inclusively'. Neither Bysshe, nor Gildon, nor Thomas Hayward in *The British Muse*, he declares, has quoted from those shorter pieces which he himself edited. Warton goes on to tell a story of his father, who once at Magdalen College mentioned in high terms

the volume of Milton's early poems to Digby, an intimate friend of Pope: 'Mr. Digby expressed much surprise that he had never heard Pope speak of them,' and, having questioned Pope as to whether he knew anything of this hidden treasure, he supposed that in this way Pope was led to discover them, for soon *Eloisa to Abelard* came forth (1717), and it was found to be 'sprinkled with epithets and phrases of a new form and sound, pilfered from *Comus* and the *Penseroso*'. Warton regarded it as a 'phenomenon' that Pope, 'a poet not of Milton's pedigree, should be their first copier'. Whatever we may think of Warton's story, it is certain that Pope was intimately acquainted with Milton's earlier poems long before the 'grots and caverns shagg'd with horrid thorn' passed from *Comus* into *Eloisa to Abelard*. In the pastoral *Summer* rough satyrs dance as rough satyrs danced in *Lycidas*. In *Autumn* the 'lab'ring oxen' retreat in their 'loose traces' from the field as the 'laboured ox' of *Comus* came in his 'loose traces' from the furrow. In a variation of a line in the *Essay on Criticism* Phoebus touches trembling ears as he touched trembling ears in *Lycidas*. In *Windsor Forest* fields are 'crown'd with tufted trees' as in *L'Allegro* towers and battlements are bosomed high in 'tufted trees'. Again, in *Windsor Forest* 'sullen Mole' hides his diving flood as 'sullen Mole' in the *Vacation Exercise* ran underneath. In *The Messiah* Isaiah's 'hallowed lips' are 'touched with fire' as in the *Nativity* the altar is 'touched with hallowed fire'. In 1713 Tonson published the pocket edition of Milton's poems other than *Paradise Lost*, but they were easily attainable in the earlier octavo, and before this date Pope's pilferings had begun.

Pope, as Warton expresses it, is not of Milton's pedigree, and, though on occasions he borrows a phrase, he maintains his own manner with excellent discretion. He adopts a happy turn of language, but he does not yield to the influence of Milton's style. The error of Philips and other versifiers was to suppose that 'the numbers of Milton'—the words are Johnson's—'which impress the mind with veneration, combined as they are with subjects of inconceivable grandeur, could be sustained by images which at most can rise only to elegance'. The poetic diction of the eighteenth century, against which Wordsworth made his protest, is in large measure due, as Mr. Raleigh has shown, to the plastering of a Miltonic manner over themes with which it had no proper correspondence. 'The diction which Milton had invented for the rendering of his colossal imaginations was applied indifferently to all subjects—to apple-growing, sugar-boiling, the drainage of the Bedford level, the breeding of negroes, and the distempers of sheep. Thomson in *The Seasons*

had a certain magnificence of his own; but how often when his subject drops to a level does he endeavour to maintain a pomp of language. With the aid of Zippel's recent edition of *The Seasons* it is now easy to trace out his more particular and definite obligations to *Paradise Lost* and to Milton's earlier poems. Young's staccato blank verse was his own; the theatric gestures, the start of histrionic surprise are peculiarly his; yet in his choice of topics and in his way of imagining them he is often under Milton's sway, and not always to his advantage. But Pope was prudent, and stood instinctively on his guard against any influence which might confuse the law of the rimed couplet. The ripples of Canaletto belong to another realm of water than that of the live and shouldering surges of Turner's open sea. 'Milton's style,' observes Pope, as recorded in Spence's *Anecdotes*, 'is not natural; 'tis an exotic style. As his subject lies a good deal out of our world, it has a particular propriety in those parts of the poem: and when he is on earth, when he is describing our parents in Paradise, you see he uses a more natural and easy way of writing.' Though his formal style may fit the higher parts of his own poem, it does very ill for others who write on natural and pastoral subjects. Philips in his *Cyder* has succeeded extremely well in his imitation of it, but was quite wrong in endeavouring to imitate it on such a subject.' Pope knew his province and his place. In 1711 he told Caryll in a letter that he had the pictures of Dryden, Milton, and Shakespeare in his chamber that the constant remembrance of them might keep him humble. Whether they produced that desirable effect may be doubtful; but he certainly did not aspire to be Shakespearean or Miltonic.

It is no part of the purpose of this paper to trace the growth of Milton's fame outside England. A branch of that subject is dealt with in Dr. J. Martin Telleen's thesis, *Milton dans la Littérature française*. But Voltaire was in England when he published his *Essay on Epic Poetry*, and in English the book is written. A line of research pursued with zeal to the close of the century—the investigation of Miltonic sources, and especially the sources of *Paradise Lost*—seems to have originated with Voltaire. Milton, he supposed, and stated as a fact, had seen at Florence a representation of the *Adamo* of Andreini, and while the youthful poet had perceived the absurdity of the Italian drama, he yet recognized the majesty of the subject. In the course of time a score of possible sources, ranging from the poems ascribed to Cædmon down to the *Adamo Cuduto* of Serafino della Salandra, were named, and Lauder in his forgeries took advantage at a comparatively early date of the curiosity which had

been aroused. In his Introduction to *Paradise Lost*, Masson recites the names of many of these books which have been connected with Milton's epic, and dismisses the scholarship squandered in this field with the summary sentence: 'For the most part it is laborious nonsense'. From his enumeration he omits a work which seems to me to have a better claim for inclusion than many that are mentioned, the *Protoplastus* of Hieronymus Ziegler, which stands first among the Latin *Dramata Sacra*, published at Basel in 1547 under the editorship of Oporinus. Through Charles Diodati, and his uncle Dr. John Diodati, Milton had personal relations with Switzerland, where the book was published. He had himself made some stay at Geneva. He had contemplated many subjects from the Old Testament with a view to dramatic treatment, and such volumes as these—had he happened to see them—could not fail to interest him. Among the dramas here given is a *Samson*, and this also is by Ziegler. It was noticed by Lauder, in his research, partly genuine, partly fraudulent, for Milton's sources, that this Ziegler is mentioned by Milton's nephew, Edward Phillips, in his *Theatrum Poetarum*, as a writer of divers tragi-comedies and other dramatic pieces out of the Old and New Testaments; both *Protoplastus* and *Samson* are named by Phillips. There may be a portion of truth, though much exaggerated, in Lauder's supposition that Phillips's *Theatrum Poetarum* is little more than an account of the poetical authors in his uncle's library. Lauder, however, with all his discoveries, failed to see a copy of the *Dramata Sacra*, nor does Todd—at least to the date of his second edition (1809)—appear to have been acquainted with those somewhat rare volumes, which yet were known to Edward Phillips. If Milton ever looked into Ziegler's Latin play he would have found there the whole story of the creation of man and woman, the machinations of Lucifer, Belial, and Satan, the celebration of God's works by Raphael, Gabriel, and Michael, the temptation of Eve, the fall of our first parents, the expulsion from Paradise, and a recital of the long series of woes coming upon the earth, as assigned to the lips of a cherub in the closing scene. Lauder, had he come across the *Protoplastus*, might have made as good a case for Ziegler, among the authors whom Milton plundered, as he did for Ramsay or Masenius.

That Milton had read *Protoplastus* seems a not unreasonable conjecture. But however this may be, I venture to affirm with confidence—and perhaps what I shall say has been already pointed out—that one of the conjectured sources of *Paradise Lost*, commonly referred to as an original Italian drama, is no more than a translation or a rehandling of the *Protoplastus*. Joseph Cooper Walker, author of the *Historical*

Memoir on Italian Tragedy (1799), made William Hayley acquainted with 'a literary curiosity' which he obtained on a recent visit to Italy, *La Scena Tragica d' Adamo ed Eva*, by Troilo Lancetta (Venice, 1644). I have never had an opportunity of seeing Walker's literary curiosity, but Hayley gives an analysis of the play, scene by scene, which may be read in Todd's second edition of Milton's *Poetical Works* (vol. ii, pp. 236-8), and some quotations are made by Walker in the Appendix to his *Memoir on Italian Tragedy*. A comparison of these with Ziegler's Latin drama will leave no doubt on the mind of any student that Lancetta is little more than a translator. In Lancetta's address to the reader occurs a passage which Hayley fancied to have had the effect of turning Milton's mind from his original design of a dramatic treatment of the theme to the epic treatment actually adopted. In a dream Moses appears and assures the sleeper that from such a subject 'an heroic poem worthy of demigods' might be formed. This address to the reader is found only in Lancetta, but little reliance can be placed on the ingenious guess of Hayley.

Before Voltaire's *Essay on Epic Poetry* was published Fenton's edition of *Milton's Poems* had appeared, with a short life of the author (1725). Here *Comus*, *L'Allegro*, *Il Penseroso*, and *Lycidas* are justly honoured—'all written', says Fenton, 'in such exquisite strain that though Milton had left no other monument of his genius behind him, his name had been immortal.' Fenton undertook to revise the punctuation of the poems; as a fact he made a few emendations of the text, and perhaps overlooked a few printers' errors; he has been censured for 'ignorance, want of taste, and silly officiousness'. He ought rather to be commended for the exercise of considerable discretion. Monk, the biographer of Bentley, supposes that it was Fenton's example which led that great scholar to exercise his critical ingenuity in castigating the received text of *Paradise Lost*. To repeat a story told at length by Monk and briefly by Sir Richard Jebb would be a superfluity. On one important point the biographers of Bentley differ. Bentley, as is well known, directs not a few of his most disdainful comments against an imagined editor and reviser of the blind poet's work, who saw *Paradise Lost* through the press, altered it at his pleasure, and adorned it with various purple patches of his own nonsense or pretentious, schoolboy learning. Monk suggests that, without seriously attempting to impose on the public, Bentley manufactured this man of straw, awkwardly enough, as a device to take off the odium incurred by his frequent condemnation or alteration in margin or footnotes of the words of the poet. Thus

it was not Milton whom Bentley assailed with scornful criticism, but the unknown editor, fraudulent, ignorant, devoid of judgement and of taste. Jebb, on the contrary, quoting from Bentley's Preface a passage which he supposes, on slender grounds, to negative this opinion, declares his conviction that the theory of the fraudulent editor was broached by Bentley in perfect good faith. Neither biographer notices the fact that from the first it had been conjectured that Bentley's man of straw was but a politic device. And, indeed, from an early date it was asserted that Bentley had himself admitted that he did not really credit the theory which he had set forth. Johnson in his *Life of Milton* gives his decision in magisterial fashion against Bentley and his theory: 'a supposition rash and groundless, if he thought it true; and vile and pernicious, if, as is said, he in private allowed it to be false.' These words were written some forty-five years after the publication of Bentley's *Paradise Lost*. But nearly thirty years earlier Johnson had rashly supplied Lauder with a preface and a postscript to his *Essay on Milton's use and imitation of the Moderns* (1750), and there Lauder asserted not only that Bentley's phantom or persona of an editor was 'a mere chimaera', but that the doctor himself well knew the thing to be impossible, which he 'scrupled not to acknowledge on proper occasions'. We can go still further back in search for the origin of Monk's hypothesis. Bentley's quarto was published by Tonson in 1732. Several numbers of *The Grub Street Journal*, with which Pope was closely connected, in the course of that year, are in part devoted to the defence of Milton, or rather to the more congenial task of belabouring the person of the aged, but still alert and combative, Master of Trinity. In the number for May 25, a vigorous opponent, signing himself 'A. Z.', comes forward with two letters written during the preceding month. In one of these the writer challenges the statement of Bentley that his notes were 'made *extempore*, and put to the press as soon as made'. A. Z. had learnt from a gentleman, who was ready, if called on, to attest the truth of what he stated with his name, that six years previously—in other words, shortly after the publication of Fenton's edition—Bentley's friend Ashenurst declared at Bristol that the Doctor was then engaged in making notes on Milton; neither did he speak of it as a work just then taken in hand. Mitford in the Advertisement of his edition of *Milton's Poetical Works* (1834) informs us that he was in possession of the copy of Tonson's *Paradise Lost* used by Bentley for the purpose of recording his emendations and conjectures, and that the corrections published by Bentley, which number over eight hundred, are only a selection from a much larger mass remaining upon the

margin of that copy. It may be that Bentley worked during several years at a leisurely pace, and ultimately dictated the final form of his notes in haste, for the troubles in connexion with the Mastership of Trinity were urgent, and the later books of his *Paradise Lost* give indications of a hurry upon his spirits. In his second communication to *The Grub Street Journal* A. Z. considers the question of Bentley's sincerity and good faith. He lays aside the notion that Bentley was setting a trap to ensnare others into a belief in what he knew himself to be false; nor can he suppose that the Doctor doatingly takes his own dreams and fancies for realities. Discovering something like a parallel in Bentley's attribution to Dr. Colbatch, whom he wanted to pelt with mud, of a work known to be written by Middleton, A. Z. proceeds: 'Dr. Bentley knew it would be very impolitic to exercise this talent [his talent for abuse] against Milton; and therefore [he] conjures up this apparition of an editor (or by the help of a strong imagination persuades himself that there indeed was such an one) whom he may brand with scurrilous names at pleasure, give vent to his spleen, and raise the indignation of no man.'

No one who has examined Bentley's work with care can suppose that he was merely concerned to recover what Milton wrote. In some instances his conjectures go at least upon legitimate lines. They may be bad, or they may be needless, but in method they belong to the same species as legitimate corrections. For example, when in Book VII for Milton's

And Earth be chang'd to Heav'n, and Heav'n to Earth,
One Kingdom, Joy and Union without end,

Bentley proposes to read—

And Earth be chain'd to Heav'n, and Heav'n to Earth,
One Kingdom, join'd in Union without end,

we reject the proposed reading, but it is conceivable that *chained*, if dictated by the blind poet, might have been erroneously heard as *changed*, and again that *joined* might have been set down by the scribe as *Joy and*, so determining the printed text. But there are scores and hundreds of instances where Bentley's proposals can mean nothing except that he himself could write more correctly than Milton. The critic wholly reconstructs the original to suit his better judgement, omits a line or passage because he disapproves it, or adds a line because he imagines that such an addition is an advantage to the poem. He honoured the genius of Milton, but he believed that Milton was often deficient in clarity and precision of intellect, in the exact logic of poetic thought, and in that delicacy of

ear which refuses to tolerate a harshness or obstruction when difficulties in sound by a little skill can easily be smoothed away. Bentley's response to the suggestion of Queen Caroline should be a reformed *Paradise Lost*, not merely as Milton *did* write the poem in certain passages, but also as he *ought* to have written it in many others. Perhaps, as he proceeded with his task, the notion of a dishonest reviser and editor of the poem occurred to him, and that in the end he persuaded himself that the creature of his imagination might have existed. But his design is wider in scope than the correction of errors of the press, wider in scope even than the exhibition of his supposed editor's misdoings. The design is nothing less than to show how *Paradise Lost* must have been written had Milton the advantage of an eighteenth-century Aristarchus at his elbow. A comparison of Bentley's annotations with the replies in detail of Zachary Pearce is instructive in its disclosure of the ways in which the intellect—intellect of various degrees of fineness and flexibility—deals with work of the imagination. Pearce, like Bentley, is a critic of his own time, but his judgements are surer than Bentley's, partly because he has the grace of modesty, and partly because they do not always rest upon data furnished by the intellect alone.

Sir Richard Jebb pointed to one proposal of Bentley's as the sole emendation likely to be what Milton actually wrote, and at the same time certainly what he ought to have written. From the gash inflicted on Satan by the sword of Michael issues (Book VI, l. 332) a stream of 'nectarous humour'. 'An odious blunder!' cries Bentley, 'whether the printer's or the editor's hard to conjecture.' Read, therefore, as Milton gave it, 'ichorous humour'. In several instances, as where he would substitute *its* for *his*, the errors of Bentley arise from his ignorance of the history of the English language. It seems, if we may draw a conclusion from the examples given in the *New English Dictionary*, to have been left to Hobbes in 1676—a date after Milton's death—to use *ichor* for the first time in the sense of the ethereal juice which flows in the veins of the gods. When Diomedes wounds Venus in the fifth book of the *Iliad*, Chapman does not venture to anglicize the Greek *ichor*; immortal blood flows from the wound. The word *ichor* in Milton's time would seem to have been used only in a special physiological or pathological sense; it was, we may venture to think, a scientific, not a poetical, word. Neither *ichor* nor *ichorous* is anywhere to be found in Milton's *Poetical Works*. But *nectar* and the adjective *nectared* are words which he had used from an early date; the head of the Fair Infant who had died of a cough is a 'nectared head'; Lycidas laves his oozy locks with

nectar; in *Paradise Lost* brooks run nectar, vines yield nectar. To introduce into Milton's text a word which he never uses, and which perhaps was never used by an English writer until after the publication of *Paradise Lost* in the sense required, were indeed rash; and it is somewhat suggestive of the risks attending conjectural emendation to note that the adjective *nectarous*, which our great classical scholars Bentley and Jebb would displace, is a word so Miltonic that perhaps to him it may owe its origin. No earlier example is cited in the *New English Dictionary* than the 'nectarous draughts' of the fifth book of *Paradise Lost*.

The few instances in which Bentley established the true text of Milton, or suggested a highly probable reading, escaped the notice of Jebb among the eight hundred and odd proposals of that rash and presumptuous—yet intellectually acute—critic. It did not require eminent genius to notice that in B. vii, l. 451, 'Let th' Earth bring forth Fowle living in her kind' the printer had mistaken a long *s* for an *f* in his manuscript, and that Milton's word was *soul*, not *fowl*; but the error had been repeated in a series of editions and was not corrected until 1732. The handsome quarto has, therefore, certainly served Milton scholarship to the extent of a single letter. In the same seventh book, l. 321, Bentley's conjecture 'the swelling gourd' for the previous 'smelling gourd' has found some favour with editors and critics. It was approved by Upton in his *Critical Observations on Shakespeare*; Keightley introduced it into his text; Masson rejects it, but so cautious and judicious a scholar as Dr. W. Aldis Wright reads with Bentley (and the Capell MS.) 'the swelling gourd'. Bentley should also be given credit for reading *hither* in place of *thither* in B. xi, l. 344, though here he is only reverting unawares to the earlier text which had been corrupted in the edition of 1705. If all were collected from Bentley's notes that can be regarded as having value for the student of Milton only a few grains of wheat would lie in the hollow of the hand. And yet the spectacle of the great scholar confidently and joyously engaged in his labour of destruction which he supposed to be a labour of reformation, while compassed round with the infirmities of seventy years, and exposed to the assaults of his adversaries—his mind, as he expresses it, 'shaking off all outward uneasinesses, and involving itself, secure and pleased, in its own integrity and entertainment'—this spectacle is inspiriting, and reminds us of another combatant who bated not a jot of heart or hope, but still bore up and steered right onward.

As editor of *Paradise Lost* the old man became the object for many insults and mockeries. But his most accomplished and most effective

antagonist, Zachary Pearce, who followed him from line to line in a volume wholly devoted to a review of his edition, was hardly less courteous than he was patient. Jonathan Richardson, though Bentley was often in his mind as he brought to a conclusion his *Explanatory Notes and Remarks on Paradise Lost*, abstains, I think, from mentioning Bentley's name. Richardson, when his volume appeared, was little short of Bentley's age when, two years previously, he had published his quarto. He had loved and honoured Milton from the days of his youth. His bent for portrait-painting had led him at an early age to become a pupil of Riley. He cared for poetry only less than he cared for painting, and above all other poets he esteemed Shakespeare, Dryden, and Cowley. In Riley's studio he happened to find a copy of the first edition of *Paradise Lost*, and, in his own phrase, 'was dazzled with it'. 'From that hour,' he writes, 'all the rest faded in my estimation, or vanished.' The fruit of his studies appeared about half a century later, and while what is best worth preserving in the notes has been incorporated in the editions of Newton and Todd, the Introduction, which consists of more than 180 pages, will always have an importance of its own, for Richardson gathered recollections of Milton from those who had personal acquaintance with him and recorded these with affectionate reverence. He associates on the title-page the name of his son, who was also a portrait-painter, with his own. The elder Richardson was not a classical scholar; his time of learning was employed, he says, in business; and then with an outbreak of paternal affection he adds: 'But after all I have the Greek and Latin tongues, I have them because a part of me possesses them, to whom I can recur at pleasure, just as I have a hand when I write or paint, feet to walk, and eyes to see. My son is my learning, as I am that to him which he has not; we make one man.' Richardson was perhaps the first to comment intelligently on Milton's peculiarities of spelling, *thir* for *their*, *mee* for *me*, when emphasis is required, and others; his care is evinced by the fact that he notices the existence of some differences of text in different copies of the first edition of *Paradise Lost*. He indulged a fancy of his own for beginning a sentence or a paragraph without the usual capital letter, when the first word was unemphatic, and sometimes he followed Milton's example in doubling the final *e*; thus on p. cxxxiv the unemphatic *wee* and the emphatic *Wce* may both be found. The portrait of Milton prefixed as a frontispiece to Richardson's volume is worthy of notice; it is his rehandling of a crayon drawing, doubtfully ascribed to Faithorne, but not identical with the drawing from which the portrait in *The History of Britain* (1670) was engraved. This crayon, which passed into Tonson's possession,

was photographed in 1861 by permission of Mr. Baker, of Bayfordbury, Herts, for Sotheby's *Ramblings in Elucidation of the autograph of Milton*. It will be remembered that De Quincey considered that the frontispiece of Richardson's volume might serve as an admirable portrait of Wordsworth, an opinion emphatically negatived in my hearing by Wordsworth's friend, Robert Perceval Graves. Richardson endeavoured to add vigour to his original, and placed a laurel wreath upon the hair; 'all the world,' he says, 'has given it to Milton long since.' The crayon drawing then in Richardson's possession disputes with the lost original of the 1670 engraving the claim to have been the likeness which drew forth from Milton's daughter Dorothy the exclamation 'Tis my father! 'tis my dear father! I see him! 'tis the very man!' I may add that I possess two pencil drawings on vellum by Jonathan Richardson, of which one, dated 1734, the year in which he published his *Explanatory Notes*, is evidently from the crayon drawing; it has the advantage of hair uncrowned; the other, dated 1737, is a profile—possibly an attempt to imagine Milton's face as presented in the crayon from a wholly different point of view. As the work of a skilled and conscientious artist interested in his subject, the experiment is not without value.¹

It was from Richardson's drawing that Vertue engraved the bust which appears in the first volume of Birch's edition of the *Historical, Political, and Miscellaneous Works of Milton*, published in two folio volumes in 1738. The arrangement of the works by Birch aims at being chronological. Birch includes *Concerning the reasons of the War with Spain*, which Toland had omitted, and he adds certain pages—the authenticity of which has been questioned—to the *History of Britain*; these pages, supposed by Birch to have been excised by the licencer, were perhaps omitted, as irrelevant, by Milton himself. His account of Milton's Life adds some particulars to what had previously been known; he examined the Cambridge manuscripts, and recorded many of their various readings; and his notes upon the growth of Milton's fame in England and on the Continent are fuller than any preceding treatment of the subject. He for the first time printed those remarkable lines beginning 'Fair mirror of foul times', alleged to have been written at Chalfont during the plague—lines which, if not by Milton, have caught the movement of his verse in a remarkable degree. Birch's objection to their authenticity—that the choice of war, pestilence, or famine is said to have been offered to

¹ Dr. G. C. Williamson informs me that one of these is the original drawing for the engraving No. 117, and the other that for No. 190 of his large paper catalogue of Portraits, &c., of Milton, 1908.

David in connexion with his 'sin for the fair Hittite' instead of with his numbering of the army—is somewhat lightly set aside by Masson in his *Life of Milton*; but there is force in the objection, for in *Paradise Regained* (B. III. l. 410) the poet shows that he was not forgetful of this passage of the Old Testament.

Birch's bulky folios were not of a nature to add much to the popularity of Milton. But a Miltonic enthusiasm was in the air. In the preceding year Mr. Auditor Benson erected a monument to Milton in Westminster Abbey; he produced a Milton medal, employed Rysbrack to make two busts, and gave £1,000 to William Dobson for a translation of *Paradise Lost* into Latin verse. Two years after the publication of Birch's Prose Works appeared (1740) the quarto volume *New Memoirs of the Life and Poetical Works of Mr. John Milton*, by Francis Peck, described by Masson as a 'silly medley of odds and ends', a volume adorned with a finely engraved pseudo-portrait, and containing the curious pseudo-Miltonic translation of Buchanan's *Baptistes*, yet, notwithstanding its silliness, not without some value for those who will take the pains to turn over its pages. *Baptistes*, laughed at by Warburton, was accepted as genuine by William Lauder. The anonymous essay on *Milton's Imitation of the Ancients* followed in 1741; in the same year was published *A verbal Index to Paradise Lost*, and Paterson's *Complete Commentary* on that poem was issued in 1744. As yet Milton's early poems had received comparatively little attention; they waited in a half obscurity to obtain due recognition from the Romantic revival. But in the year of Birch's folios, 1738, the way was prepared for a popular reception of this part of Milton's work by the presentation on the Drury Lane stage of Dr. Dalton's version of *Comus*, with added characters, added speeches, and songs set to the charming music of Dr. Arne. It seems not improbable that the success of Arne's music led Handel two years later to set to music the arrangement by Charles Jennens of *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*. Handel's *Samson*—composed at an earlier date—was performed in 1743. Dalton's *Comus* should be judged with reference to the purpose at which it aimed; the *Mask*, as written by Milton, might please an audience fit, though few; it could not be a popular success. But a popular success *Comus* was, and the public reputation of Milton owes something to the acting of Quin and, at a later date, of Henderson, to the voice of Kitty Clive, and afterwards to that of Ann Catley. Though some of the songs are trivial, and some are modish, Dalton's work is not without a certain skill and ingenuity. A second Attendant Spirit supports the Lady as the first guides and encourages the brothers; the crew of the enchanter bustles

with male and female singers. Comus opens the third act with lines from *L'Allegro* invoking Euphrosyne, and presently the goddess fair and free, or rather a nymph who represents her, enters singing of

Pulses beating, bosoms burning,
Bosoms with warm wishes panting,
Words to speak those wishes wanting,

and more in the like amorous strain. A pastoral nymph, with a melancholy and despondent air, tells in a musical ballad, how she seeks in vain for Damon. And the spectators are presently gratified with a slow dance 'expressive of the passions of love'. Queen Caroline had befriended Milton's daughter; Dr. Johnson befriended his granddaughter by contributing a Prologue to *Comus*, spoken by Garrick, when in 1750 it was acted for her benefit at Drury Lane :—

What though she shine with no Miltonian fire,
No fav'ring Muse her morning dreams inspire ;
Yet softer claims the melting heart engage,
Her youth laborious, and her blameless age ;
Hers the mild merits of domestic life,
The patient sufferer and the faithful wife.

Quin's rendering of the part of Comus at the earlier presentation of the play was distinguished by something that seemed to the spectators like superhuman dignity and grace. 'With what a superior greatness,' cries a critic, 'does he introduce himself to us by his manner of delivering the glorious lines that open his part :—

The star that bids the shepherd fold,
Now the top of heaven doth hold.'

He courted the lady as a superior, as a deity condescending to a mortal. The enthusiastic critic goes on to affirm that 'if anything claims the title of being the greatest sentence, and most nobly pronounced of any on the English theatre, it is that threat of Comus to the lady, where, on her offering to get up to leave him, he tells her,

Nay, lady, sit—if I but wave this wand
Your nerves are all bound up in alabaster,
And you a statue ; or as Daphne was,
Root-bound, who fled Apollo.'

The *Mask*, as Milton named it, and as it is usually named previous to 1738, came perhaps to be commonly known as *Comus* after its presentation with that title on the stage. In 1773 it was abridged by the elder Colman, and in this form was presented as an after-piece.

The half-century with which the notes in this paper are concerned

closed with the controversy aroused by William Lauder's impudent *Essay on Milton's Use and Imitation of the Moderns*, while Newton's great edition of the Poetical Works (1749-52) lies exactly on this side and on that of the year 1751, and sums up the labours of more than fifty years of study. The story of Lauder, his real services to Milton scholarship, his audacious forgeries, his exposure and his confession, is too long to be told here.

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